

## **Detailed Program**

TZEDEK Youth Initiative Ethics, Responsibility, Justice.

As Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said. “take risks, raise your voice, and push everyone to do better” with the Tzedek program

### **Park Avenue Synagogue Tzedek Fellowship**

NYM Region worked with the Park Avenue Synagogue Men’s Club and Teen Department to create a pilot program called the Tzedek Fellowship.

In collaboration, the Tzedek Fellowship was created.

The Tzedek Fellowship at PAS runs from January to May. There are two major components to the Tzedek Fellowship: seminars and mentorship meetings. Monthly seminars support fellows in developing crucial leadership skills as well as creating community within the fellowship. Each cohort meeting

The Tzedek Fellowship is a new hands-on leadership training initiative in the PAS teen department. Tzedek runs from January to May. Teens applied to be part of the fellowship with a tikkun olam project they were already working on, or an idea to start one.

There are two major components to the Tzedek Fellowship: monthly seminars and mentorship meetings. Fellows attend monthly seminars where they will learn crucial leadership/management skills to help forward their projects. Each seminar has an action item attached to it. For example, our first session was about mission and vision statement. By the second session, each fellow used what they had learned in our cohort session to establish their mission and vision statement for their initiative. When we learned about budgeting and grant applications, Tzedek fellows found grants to apply to. When we learned about public speaking, fellows wrote and delivered elevator pitches.

Each fellow was paired with a clergy mentor at PAS. Mentors meet with their mentees regularly to offer support for their monthly action items. They helped them refine their mission statement and gave feedback on their elevator pitch,. This was a wonderful opportunity for teens to form connections with clergy and other staff members at PAS, who they might not have spoken to since their bnei mitzvah!

The PAS Tzedek Fellowship hopes to be an example of how different synagogues can interpret the NYM Region’s Tzedek Fellowship to suit their youth’s needs.

The 2023 PAS Tzedek Fellowship has nine participants with eight different projects.

- **Teens Combating Parkinson’s** – this teen felt frustrated that the Parkinson’s Foundation didn’t have any opportunities for teens to get involved, so she created them! She educates teens about Parkinson’s and is thinking about other ways they can help
- **Calling Generations Podcast** – this teen wanted to connect with senior members of our community to hear their stories and learn from their wisdom. In conversations with her mentor, Rabbi Cosgrove, she realized that she didn’t want

to be the only one to benefit from these stories, so she decided to turn this initiative into a podcast that can be shared with the whole community. Teens who are involved will be paired with seniors in our community to form relationships and, if they'd like to, be interviewed for a podcast which will be shared with the greater PAS community.

- **Our Unique Minds** – this teen used her own struggles with mental health to inspire her to inspire others. She knows that teens can feel helpless when they're dealing with mental health issues, so she is creating a website with mental health resources and stories to inspire hope. The stories will show that, not only can mental health improve, but they will celebrate the ways our minds all work differently and show how this uniqueness is not always a bad thing.
- **Athlete Attire for Change** – this teen is working to connect children with terminal illnesses who are interested in fashion design with professional athletes. The children will design clothes that the athletes will wear publicly. Then, this teen will auction off the item of clothing and donate the proceeds to medical research to cure the illness of the child who designed the clothes.
- **Women Fund Women** – this teen provides small business loans to women in different countries in Africa. Because the American dollar goes farther in Africa, her loans of \$100 - \$300 go a long way in empowering women to create a better life for themselves. The fact that these are loans and not donations further empowers the women to see themselves not as a charity, but an investment. This also allows the student to help more people because, when she gets the loan back, she reinvests the money in another woman.
- **Food Pantry Enhancement** – this teen has been a part of the PAS teen-led food pantry for a few years, but realized that we could expand our impact by providing items other than food. He realized that if New Yorkers are struggling to afford food, they are likely struggling to afford other essentials. He's expanding the reach of our food pantry by providing toiletries.
- **Dress Equity** – when this teen finished Bat Mitzvah season, she realized she had a bunch of dresses that she would never wear again. Rather than let them sit in her closet or throw them away, she decided to sell them at an extremely low price, and donate the profits to support marginalized teens in New York City. She collects dresses from teenagers after B'nai Mitzvahs, Sweet Sixteens, and Proms to make high fashion more accessible to New York teens in lower income brackets.
- **Teens Combating Antisemitism Task Force** – these teens were distraught by hearing about the rise in antisemitism this past fall and wanted to do something about it. They formed the task force firstly to educate teens (and themselves) about antisemitism and take action. They've brought in speakers from the ADL, teen-led organizations about antisemitism, the JCC, and more. They ran a

workshop for teens to know what to say when they hear antisemitism from their peers, their teachers, or online. They're planning a letter-writing campaign to encourage legislators to condemn antisemitism. There are 45 teens in the task force.

Our seminars took place monthly in the PAS teen lounge on Sundays from 6:30 – 8:00 pm

2/5/23 - Initial Meeting and Mission and Vision Statement – led by Ariel Glueck

3/5/23 - Organizing and Outreach – led by Amanda Miller of the Worker's Circle

4/16/23 - Prep for Elevator Pitch – led by Ariel Glueck

5/7/23 - Grant Writing and Budgeting – led by Rabbi Solmsen

5/21/23 - Public Speaking and Elevator Pitch – led by Rabbi Zauzmer

These teen programs have been largely successful, but even when they come across challenges, they learn from them. They have their mentors to support them when they hit a wall.

Each participant in the PAS Tzedek Fellowship will receive awards offered by the Awards Committee.

#### General NYM/FJMC Tzedek Fellowship

Each synagogue involved in the NYM/FJMC Region can participate in the Tzedek program in the way they want.

The NYM/FJMC Region is committed to promote social justice and well-being in education, inclusion, diversity and programming. As a Region we want to encourage “caring for the other” and the opportunity for personal growth, activism, and leadership.

Tzedek is designed to stir up students and teenager ideas from NYM/FJMC members Synagogues with a mission of developing community programs to address Jewish values that can have an impact on the Jewish community and beyond.

The Jewish values that Tzedek encourages students to make a difference in are:

- Jews of the diaspora
- Mental health issues, including suicide and addiction, in youth
- Diversity equity and inclusion of marginalized or underserved Jews be it due to race, ethnicity, LGBTQ+ identity, or physical and mental disabilities
- Anti Semitism
- Climate change
- Israel advocacy

The PAS program is just one example of the ways that this program can cause a ripple effect of change in both youth empowerment and these topic areas.

Students can work individually on a project in order to be considered for a Tzedek Award. The creation of a cohort, seminars, and mentorship connections are optional.